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SOURCE Neues Deutschland

RESPONSIBILITIES OF POLITICAL ORGANS IN GDR AGRICULTURE

[Comment: The following information is taken from two issues of a GDR daily newspaper, Neues Deutschland. Most of the information is extracted from a speech entitled "Expand Political Mass Work in Villages" given by Erich Mueckenberger, a Secretary of the ZK (Central Committee) of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) who is responsible for agricultural matters, at the 17th meeting of the ZK of the SED on 22 and 23 January 1954. The speech deals primarily with the tasks required to strengthen political control in all phases of agricultural life, including the LPSs (Agricultural Production Cooperatives), VEGs (People-Owned Farms), MTSs (Machine Tractor Stations), and VGB-BHGs (Farmers' Mutual Aid Associations and Farmers' Trade Cooperatives). The speech also contains criticism of party work in the field of agriculture.

The remainder of the information consists of excerpts from an article entitled "The Village Newspaper - An Important Medium for Political Agitation," which was written by Georg Wenk, member of the Bezirk management of the SED in Cottbus.

Number in parentheses refer to appended sources.]

Excerpts From Speech by Mueckenberger

Some central and local governmental organs, as well as party managements, have not yet realized that the following conditions have made the administration of the village more complicated for the party and the government organs: establishment of the MTSS, VEGs, and LPGs; the principle of levying delivery quotas per hectare; the struggle for a more rapid increase in crop yields, and the struggle for an over-all development of livestock breeding. It is therefore necessary, in carrying out the new course, that attention be given to the importance of the village, to the problems of agriculture, and to all problems of political mass work in the village.

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The VEGs must be developed into highly productive and profitable model farms, and they must exert a strong influence toward a more rapid political development of the villages. The party organizations are frequently negligent in political persuasion work, in the enforcement of strict work discipline, and in the application of new work methods. Consequently the Main Department of VEGs must see to it that the leadership of the VEGs is strengthened by politically and technically qualified members. The Bezirk and Kreis managements of the SED must be fully responsible for the political and moral training of agricultural workers and for the elevation of the level of party work in the VEGs. The party work must be supported by the agricultural workers in the VEGs. In many VEGs there is still no systematic recruiting of candidates among agricultural workers. Above all, it is important that political leaders be appointed more rapidly in all VEGs.

It is necessary to call the attention of the ZK to the fact that a large number of LPG members are former farm hands. In this connection it appears that various LPGs, such as the Oschatz LPG, have not treated these agricultural workers as full-fledged LPG members. This is not in keeping with the law and weakens the LPGs. It is the duty of Bezirk and Kreis managements, party organizations, and government organs to see to it that the former hired hands receive farm plots and that they are supported in the development of their private farms. There have also been complaints that the local, Kreis, and Bezirk governmental organs, especially the burgomasters, are neglecting the LPGs and, in some cases, are even opposing them. This cannot be tolerated. In the villages where the burgomasters represent reaction or where they are actually enemies of the LPGs, it is the responsibility of the party organization to bring this matter up for group discussion, for example, in village public meetings, and to see to it that progressive burgomasters are chosen.

The sponsorship work of party organizations of [industrial] enterprises sponsoring agricultural groups should include political support for the party organizations of the LPGs, aid for the agricultural party organizations in the development of party work, and aid in the destruction of enemy elements in the village. The economic and political strengthening of the LPGs is closely connected with the strengthening of party work in the LPGs. At present there are party organizations or candidate groups in about 60 percent of the LPGs. This is inadequate. The Kreis managements and the political managements of the MTSS must be systematically engaged in building up party organizations and candidate groups in the LPGs as well as establishing new LPGs.

It is the task of party organizations and mass organizations, particularly the VDGB-BHGs and the political departments of the MTSS, to convince all farmers in the GDR of the importance of fulfilling the purchase and compulsory delivery plans. The Kreis and Bezirk managements and the village party organizations must concern themselves with the status of fulfillment of these plans. This is necessary because there are some farmers who follow the instructions of RIAS (Radio in the American Sector), thereby deliberately disregarding the laws of the GDR and their obligations as citizens.

The MTSS are not only of importance in the economic sense but also have major political tasks to fulfill in connection with the democratic transformation of the village. A serious defect in the work of the MTSS is the turnover among the leading MTS functionaries, including the political leaders. It is recommended that political leaders and key functionaries of the MTSS not be allowed to leave their jobs without the consent of the secretariats of the Bezirk managements; they should remain at one MTS for a minimum of 3 years. This is necessary so that the political leaders can become thoroughly familiar with their duties and responsibilities, and can gain the confidence of the farmers.

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During the 1953 harvest season, political managements of various MTSS started publishing village newspapers. It is necessary that the agitation and agriculture departments of the Bezirk and Kreis managements concern themselves regularly with the publication of village newspapers.

The realization of the new course and the increase in agricultural production require a basic change in the work of those government organs dealing with agricultural problems. Superficial, lax administration in agriculture must be stopped. It is recommended that a Main Department for Agricultural Propaganda be set up in the Ministry for Agriculture and Forestry for the popularization and introduction of scientific knowledge and new methods in the field of agriculture.

A serious defect in the political mass work is the fact that there has not been enough emphasis on political tasks in connection with the increase of agricultural production. Thus the agricultural department of the SED, on all levels from the ZK down to the Kreise, has for the most part concerned itself only with the technical problems of agriculture, without influencing the political mass work in the villages. This situation must be rectified as soon as possible; political enlightenment work in the villages must be carried on constantly and must be extended to all villages of the various Kreise. It is the duty of the party organizations to hold periodic meetings and discussions with the working farmers and to secure their participation in party activities.

The activities of the social mass organizations must be essentially improved in order to develop political mass work in the village and to strengthen the bond between the party and the agricultural workers. In this respect the VDGB-BHG, as the democratic mass organization of the working farmers, is of particular importance. The VDGB-BHGs in all villages of the GDR are called upon for active cooperation in the democratization of the villages and the execution of village plans. Another mass organization, the FDJ (Free German Youth), frequently dissociates itself from the village youth and does not conduct a systematic recruitment campaign in the villages. The party and the FDJ must be actively engaged in reducing the migration of the country youth to the cities. The DFD (German Democratic Women's League) must devote much more attention to the life of women agricultural workers, and must see to it that they are actively included in the sociopolitical life of the village.

The preparations for the Fourth Party Congress must give rise to a basic change in the work of the party organizations of the villages. SED membership in the villages must be increased through the recruitment of the most progressive agricultural workers from MTSS, LPGs, and VEGs. All party organizations must realize that there can be no improvement in the political mass work in the village or increase in agricultural production without a basic improvement of the work of party organizations in the villages.(1)

Excerpts From Article by Weisk

In order to improve political agitation work in agricultural areas, the political departments of the MTSS in Bezirk Cottbus, following the example of Bezirk Potsdam, have begun the publication of village newspapers. As an important medium of agitation, the village newspaper has the task of winning over the majority of the working farmers to the policies of the SED and the government. The political departments of the MTSS have realized that the village newspaper is an important medium for political mass work; 22 of the 30 MTSS in Bezirk Cottbus have already published village newspapers.

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It has been established that the village newspaper, wherever it exists, is of interest to the working agricultural populace. In addition the village newspaper assists in improving the over-all work of the MTSs and LPGs. For example an article appeared in the village newspaper Der Scheinwerfer entitled "Sponsorship Work in the LPG." It criticized several sponsorship enterprises for poor sponsoring work. The result was that BW (Railroad Workshop) Cottbus responded immediately and contacted the LPG, which it was sponsoring.

The village newspapers do not handle political matters in abstract terms but relate them directly to the problems to be solved in the MTSs or villages. In this respect some of the village newspapers are superior to almost all plant newspapers. The articles in village newspapers should strengthen confidence in the MTSs. More tractor operators, farmers belonging to LPGs, and private farmers should be given the opportunity to contribute to the newspapers. Kreis managements must increase and improve their support and guidance with respect to the format of the village newspapers, in order to make them more effective and more interesting.(2)

SOURCES

1. Neues Deutschland, 27 Jan 54
2. Ibid., 28 Jan 54

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